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LETTER

FROM A

CLERGYMAN

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CONCERNING THE

First Question in the OFFICE

FOR THE

Ordaining of DEACONS, viz.

Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon you this Office and Ministration, to serve GOD for the Promoting of his Glory, and the Edifying of his People?



L O N D O N :

Sold by J. RIVINGTON, in St. Paul's Church-Yard, and E. WITHERS, near Temple-Bar. 1758.

LETTER

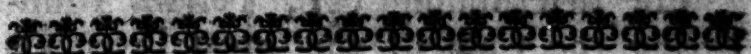
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A LETTER from a Clergyman, &c.

DEAR SIR,

 Knew not how I could so effectually give you my sentiments upon that interesting Matter to us both, *the inward Call to the Ministry*, as by bringing my Heart under Examination upon it, and communicating to you, what I found the real State of my Case. Yourself will find, I doubt not, a good End answered by pursuing the same Course. And I cannot but wish all my Brethren might at proper Times engage in the like Enquiry.

Concerning my outward Commission there is no Question; having been regularly ordained a minister in the Church of England. But concerning the being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon me this Ministry, I should enquire, wherein the inward special Call to the Ministry doth consist.

For

For determining this, besides considering the Case of the great Preachers in the Old and New Testament, it is evident to me from the Reason of the thing, that those who are inwardly called to the Ministry. 1. Should be led particularly to attend to, and observe the necessities of the People about them. 2. That seeing the Want there is of it, they should be effectually inclined to preach God's most holy Word to them. 3. That the sole End they have in View, should be the Glory of God in preaching his Word for the Recovery and Salvation of their Neighbours, or of others, wheresoever Providence shall call them. And, 4. That they should be so determined for this Work, as not to be deterred from it, by any Apprehension of Danger, Want or Reproach, foreseen and expected in general.

A Disposition for the Work of the ministry circumstanced in this manner is plainly needful for the due undertaking and discharge of the ministerial Office. And whoever knows his own corrupted Heart and the Distastefulness of the Word of God to a Gain-saying and Sin-loving World, will readily ascribe such a Disposition to the Holy Ghost.

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Here then the matter lies before me. And it behoves me to make diligent search. The Point is of the last Importance, not only to my own Soul, but to the souls of others, as well as to the Honour of GOD. I desire to seek into it, with a strong Sense upon my Mind, that nothing in Time or Eternity is of so much Consequence to me.

“ Was I inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, when I undertook the Ministry?”

1. *Was I led particularly to attend to and observe the Necessities of the People about me?*

As I was ignorant of the Salvation that is in Christ Jesus, and of my want of Him in all his Offices: So I had not taken the least Notice of the spiritual State of others. It was to me, as a Thing I had no Concern with, that Sins of the grossest Kinds were committing on every Side of me. And after I was ordained, I had no Sight or Thought of the Condition my Parishioners were in, though I had some desire that they should come to Church and Sacrament, and not drink, swear, and the like.

2. *In the View of the People's Want, was I led, and effectually inclined to preach the Word of GOD to them?* Hav-

Having no View of the People's real Wants concerning their Souls, this could not be a Principle inclining me to preach the Gospel to them. I had not any Inclination arising from Views of Usefulness to others, disposing me to undertake the Ministry; nor indeed, any other Concern about the Matter of Preaching, than that I must do it some how or other, as a Sunday's Task. I remember, that the Day I was ordained Deacon, my Conscience was something alarmed and forced me to this Resolution, that I would endeavour to do my Duty as a Clergyman. But my Thoughts were altogether confused, and it lasted then the Ordination Hour only, though at Seasons afterwards, I found the like Remonstrances, which drove me to something like Diligence, the short time they were upon me.

3. *Was the sole End I had before me the Glory of GOD, in Preaching his Word, for the Recovery and Salvation of the People about me, or others.*

It is most evident from the former Considerations, and I am fully convinced of it as a certain Fact, that I had not any such Thing in View. The Ends engaging me to go into the Ministry were,
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that my Friends designed me for it, that therein I should get a Livelihood at least, but I was most particularly pleased with this thought, that when I had passed the Examinations, and was once ordained, I should be out of all restraint, might do as I liked, and be my own Master.

4. *Was I so determined upon this Work, that I was not to be deterred from it by any Apprehension of Danger, Want or Reproach, which I foresaw or expected in general.*

I had not the slightest Apprehension, that any of these Things were likely to come upon me: so ignorant was I of the Nature of Man and of the Gospel. I had never observed any such Thing falling upon the Clergy wherever I had been. I dreamt of no Danger, feared not Want, and concerning Reproach it was far from my Thoughts; I doubted not I should make such an Appearance as to get the Esteem and Praise of the World: And truly, had I gone on as I begun, living vainly, preaching smooth Things, and not setting myself to the Work in Earnest, I had lived and died without Suspicion, that a Minister of the Gospel in the Church of England should
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run any Hazard of Reproach, or worse, for preaching her Doctrines, and labouring to lead his People into the Practice of them.

After the most attentive Review, I must freely own my Case was no other nor better than this. Wherefore, I see not the least Shadow of Ground to suppose "I was inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to undertake the Ministry." For this my most sinful Presumption, and for my after Behaviour, in many succeeding Years, confirming, that GOD had not sent me, I ought to lie low in the Dust, the Remainder of my Days.

But have I been since moved by the Holy Ghost to the Work of the Ministry?

My dear Friend, assist me with your Prayers, that I may be satisfied in a Point so nearly connected with all my Hopes, and that GOD may graciously supply what is wanting to make me an able Minister of the New Testament, a faithful Steward of the Mysteries of GOD. If I am not moved by the Holy Ghost to the Work I am engaged in, I shall do nothing, as I ought, I shall bring the Ruin of others upon my guilty Head; be overcome by worldly Fears,

Fears, seduced by worldly Interests, and Sacrifice to my own Praise. I shall be without Courage to stand in the Gap against prevailing Iniquity, and to use every Measure conducive to the Establishment and Increase of my Master's Kingdom. Unwilling therefore to be deceived, while also I would not deny the Gift of GOD, permit me to lay before you, what I can discern relative to my present Dispositions towards the ministerial Office. And that by going over again the several Questions just proposed.

1. *Have I been led particularly to attend to and observe the Necessities of the People about me?*

In some Degree I have ; and what I see, has given me much Concern. I see the Number of real Christians small. I see that the Form of Godliness, has been thrusting out the Power of it, till itself is well nigh lost in Licentiousness. I see the Generality dead in Sin, and sleeping securely in a profound Ignorance of the Truths of the Gospel. I see the Ministry in general long ago fallen into a dry moral Way of Preaching, that neither can reach the Disease of the Hearers, nor has the Promise of the Spirit to accompany it. And I earnestly wish I saw
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none of those who have undertaken that sacred Office, so engaged in ambitious and self-interested Pursuits, that they have neither Leisure nor Inclination, nor Ability to go through the ministerial Duties. In the general, I see GOD forgotten, Christ neglected or despised, and the Kingdom of Darkness extensively established.

In these Views have I been, and am I effectually inclined to preach the Gospel? I trust it has been so with me for a Season. Surely I have some Desire that the Gospel should be known and obeyed, and Souls be saved. I would be engaged in this Service. I think the ministerial Work my indispensable Duty. I choose and prefer it. On no Consideration would I quit it. Blessed be GOD, that I can thus answer with any Degree of Confidence! The Reflection ought to inspire me with all Gratitude, whilst I ought also to be exceedingly ashamed of my Coldness and Luke-warmness in, and to the honourable Labour, of my being no more animated to spend and be spent in the Cause of Jesus and of Souls.

3. *Is the sole End before me the Glory of GOD in preaching his Word for the Recovery and Salvation of the People around me, and others?*

I cannot discern that I have regard to Preferment or Interest. Honour or advantage seem to have no Weight with me to engage a single Wish for a Situation, wherein I might have more of either. I desire to leave the Destination of my Place of Service entirely to GOD, and to lie upon his Hands for a Maintenance. Yet I find my Heart would be hankering after Esteem. But I see, lament, and disallow its sacrilegious suggestions; and I am satisfied the Prospect of getting Reputation is not what moves me to preach the Gospel. I dare not say my Aim is simple and pure; that nothing alloys it, nevertheless I must believe, because experience has proved it to me that the Interest of Religion is the prevailing Object.

4. *Am I determin'd upon this Work in despite of all Discouragements?*

Warm Resolutions cannot decide this. The Case of the Great Apostle St. Peter teaches me to have no Dependence upon them. From Observation of what is past, I shall make the safest Judgment of my real Stedfastness, and how far I may depend upon any Purpose of going on in the Face of Discouragement.

Timid by Constitution, and my Heart fond of keeping the Esteem of Men,

I have since the Time I first preached GOD's Word to an adulterous Generation, found innumerable and many Times very painful Searchings of Heart. Fear and Pride did not allow me to do any Thing without making formidable Remonstrances, and have kept me, perhaps, may do so to this Day, from acting up to what I ought. However, from the first, wherever I saw Duty, they could never prevail with me to decline it, Neither have they been able to fix a Thought upon me of yielding any Thing, or of taking the least Step for bringing down Christ to the Humours, Fashions, and Maxims of the World.

Besides which, their Remonstrances have been insensibly blunting, and they have been pleading with less Frequency and Power. May I be safe on this Side, I have less Reason to fear that any thing on the Quarter of Interest shall be able to deter me from faithfully preaching the Gospel.

Thus have I opened myself freely, and shall rejoice if the Perusal of my Case, be a Means of communicating to you either Light or Heat. Favour me with your Observations, and believe me your affectionate

Brother and Servant.

